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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. PRESIDENT OBAMA'S TRIP TO ASIA

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage November 14-16 on a merger announced Saturday between two major players in Taiwan's LCD panel industry; on the APEC leaders' summit in Singapore and U.S. President Barack Obama's visit to China; on a rally in Taipei Sunday afternoon to protest imports of U.S. beef; and on the extramarital affairs of a KMT legislator.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a column in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" discussed President Obama's visit to China and said that, given Obama's performance since he assumed office, Taiwan should not expect Obama to make a gesture to protect Taiwan during his trip to China. An op-ed piece in the pro-unification "United Daily News" urged President Ma Ying-jeou to speak up to remind Obama of his commitment to Taiwan's security and to urge Chinese President Hu Jintao not to infringe on the fundamental interests of the Taiwan people. A column in the KMT-leaning "China Times" said Obama's presence at the APEC summit signaled that even in the face of China's rise, the United States will not forsake its responsibilities in the Asia-Pacific region. A column in the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post," however, said the United States is "attaching more importance to the Group of 20 than to APEC and an emerging new Asian bloc dominated by the People's Republic." End summary.

A) "Obama's Visit to China Will Hardly Achieve Any Results"

Cao Changqing, an independent commentator, wrote in the "Weekly Commentary" column in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 680,000] (11/15):

"U.S. President Barack Obama arrived in Beijing on November 15 [sic]. This is his first trip to Asia, which naturally draws a lot of attention. One could tell from the order of the countries he will visit (China ahead of South Korea) and his time allotment (a seven-day trip to Asia and four days to be spent in China) that Obama, unlike his predecessor President George W. Bush, has a preference for China. But judging from the major differences between China and the United States, Obama's visit to China will likely generate more symbolic significance than substantive effects.
...

"When it comes to cross-Straits issues, even though it is unlikely that Obama will be as bad as his former Democratic predecessor Bill Clinton, who delivered the 'three No's' [policy] to democratic Taiwan on the turf of the Communist Party, he will very likely echo Beijing's one China [policy] while trying not to emphasize the 'Taiwan Relations Act' deliberately. Exactly what he will say to state his position is of course worth [our] attention. ... Obama has a limited understanding of cross-Straits issues and the China issue. In the only article he has ever published about his Asian policy, he mentioned China five times, but not once [did he mention] Taiwan. The article mainly emphasized [the need to] build a friendly relationship with China, without a single word mentioning the threats posed by the military rise of the Chinese Communist Party to Taiwan. Obama's Asian affairs consultant, Jeffrey Bader, was once a National Security Council member for [former] President

Clinton who said the 'three No's' to Taiwan. When Russia's army invaded Georgia last year, Bader even co-wrote an article with former AIT Director Douglas Paal, asking Taiwan not to annoy Beijing; not a single sentence [in that article] talked about Taiwan being suppressed by China in the international community and fundamental issues such as the Taiwan people's right to choose [their future]. As a result, in terms of cross-Strait issues, Taiwan must not expect that Obama will make a gesture to protect Taiwan during his trip to China this time."

B) "Ma Speaks up and Lets Obama and Hu Jintao Hear Taiwan's [Voice]"

Tsong Tien-tzou, academician at the Academia Sinica, opined in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (11/16):

"... For Taiwan, China's suppression is too much to tell, and the biggest threat comes from the 1,400 missiles [targeting Taiwan], which are aimed at putting Taiwan's society ill at ease. Also, China has often been accused of using Internet hackers to invade computer systems of other countries in an attempt to steal military intelligence and high-tech classified information. It is likely that [China] will sabotage [Taiwan's] power supply system through hackers in order to paralyze the island's financial system and force Taiwan to yield. What the [Taiwan] public is concerned about is whether the United States will, out of fear about China, stop Taiwan from purchasing advanced weapons and slacken U.S. assistance to improve Taiwan's national defense technology. At this critical moment of the 'meeting between Obama and [Chinese President] Hu Jintao,' we hope Ma Ying-jeou will speak up in his capacity as an elected president in Taiwan and, on behalf of his people, remind Obama of his commitment to Taiwan's security and urge Hu not to infringe on the fundamental interests of the Taiwan people."

C) "Obama at APEC, Publicly and Backstage"

Taiwan's former Ambassador to South Africa Loh I-cheng wrote in his column in the KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 120,000] (11/16):

"... Why does the United States take ... APEC so seriously? The [answer] is also related to Obama's imminent visit to mainland China. Obama wants to seize the [APEC] opportunity in Singapore to tell all the Asian nations: the United States regards itself as a Pacific nation and a major force in maintaining peace in Asia -- a situation which was true in the past and will remain so in the future. Even in the face of the rise of China, the United States will never forsake its responsibilities in the Asia-Pacific region. His message is clear: all Asia-Pacific nations should feel relaxed -- whenever necessary, the United States will not hesitate to offend Beijing and it will be their strong supporter and will never back down or back out. It is exactly because Obama is about to visit China that such a 'speechless expression of [the United States'] position' becomes more prominent. ..."

D) "Obama's First Meet with Hatoyama"

Columnist Joe Hung wrote in conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] (11/16):

"... Whether Washington will concede Tokyo an equal footing in concluding a new mutual defense treaty is open to doubt. The chances are that Uncle Sam wouldn't. The United States, mired in the quagmire of Iraq and Afghanistan as it is, is attaching more importance to the Group of 20 than to the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation and an emerging new Asian bloc dominated by the People's Republic. Or Hatoyama may lose credence by then if the opposition takes control over the upper house and create a split Diet that will hamper his government."

STANTON